

Henry Mayhew
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Christianity and Agnosticism.

Lectures delivered by the Rev. James Simpson, at St. Peter's Cathedral, Charlottetown, P. E. I.

[In allowing us to publish these lectures, the Rev. James Simpson has asked us to state that they are little more than compilation. Many of the arguments, and often whole passages are taken from the following works: Christianity in relation to Science and Morals" by Canon Maccoll. "Reasons for believing in Christianity" by Canon Row. "The Chalcedonian Decree" by Rev. J. Fulton. "Evidences of Christianity" by Paley. "Addresses on the Resurrection" by Rev T. P. Ring. "Christ and modern Unbelief" by Rev. B. H. McKim. "Is not this the Christ" by Rev. C. J. Ridgeway. "The Church in relation to Scepticism" by Rev A. J. Harrison; and others.]

I. MODERN UNBELIEF AND A REASONABLE FAITH.

No one can be blind to the fact, that unbelief in its various forms is very prevalent in the present day. Periodicals are full of articles dealing with Atheism, Secularism, Agnosticism and Free Thought. Newspapers are continually inserting insidious little paragraphs scoffing at miracles, questioning the inspiration of Scripture, denying the resurrection of Our Lord, rejecting the possibilities of an hereafter. Novels are written for the express purpose of airing the doubts and unbelief of the various characters; wherever a number of men gather together, the conversation not infrequently develops into a religious or anti-religious discussion; so that where we will, read what we will, we are constantly confronted with the question, is Christianity true or false? Shall I believe in it or not.

Now, unbelievers may be divided roughly into three classes. First, there are those—a comparatively small number—

who have really studied the question, more or less deeply, and have come to the conclusion that the evidence in favor of Christianity is not sufficient for them to accept it. This class comprises many learned men, who are often pointed to in triumph by their followers as "the deepest thinkers of the day." But we must remember that there are others, who are quite as deep thinkers, and far more numerous, who still maintain an unflinching belief in the verities of the Christian faith.

The second class consists of those who don't wish to believe—careless lives, who find pleasure in sin and are only too glad to persuade themselves that there is no God, no Christ, no hereafter—for thereby they are relieved from the obligation of leading good lives, and can continue to sin with an easy conscience. These are often loud-mouthed in their scoffs and questionings, as if they were thus deacons of drowning the still, small voice within. The third class is made up, for the most part, of those who have been led away by the specious arguments they hear from others, or by articles they have read in magazines, and have thus had their faith undermined, and in some cases destroyed. Many of these lament the state they are in, and would give a good deal to have their faith back strong and firm of old. The fault here is that they are inclined to believe all they hear and read against Christianity, without enquiring what there is to be said on the other side. Think what doubts might be set at rest, what difficulties solved, what peace of mind restored, if those who are thus unsettled were to say to themselves, "This argument seems convincing, but I will not accept it until I have heard the other side